

23 are allowed. Claims 10 and 17-21 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as unpatentable over US Patent 6,070,176 to Downs et al., further in view of US Patent 5,986,654 to Alexander et al. Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's indication that claims 11-16 would be allowable if rewritten in independent format. However, Applicants decline to rewrite these claims in independent format at this time, since it is believed that the parent claim 10 is clearly patentable over Downs, when properly understood.

These rejections are respectfully traversed in view of the following discussion.

I. THE CLAIMED INVENTION

As described and claimed (e.g., by claim 10), the present invention is directed to a method of processing search results obtained in response to a user query. Document pointers returned by a search engine are examined to identify a source from which documents are available. The source documents are obtained.

A visual abstract for each of the documents is generated, each visual abstract being a thumbnail image. Each thumbnail image is a visual similarity of the document, as reduced in size. Each thumbnail image is formed by manipulating a corresponding source document so as to enhance visibility of at least a first portion of the source document while degrading visibility of at least a second portion of the source document. A stream of data is formatted such that when the data is displayed on a display screen, each visual abstract appears adjacent to a corresponding search result.

II. THE PRIOR ART REJECTION

The Examiner alleges that US Patent 6,070,176 to Downs et al., further in view of US Patent 5,986,654 to Alexander et al. renders obvious the invention as described by claims 10 and 17-21.

However, the present invention uses a visual abstract that comprises a thumbnail image of

the underlying source document. The thumbnail image visually appears similar to the underlying document, as reduced in size.

In contrast, Figure 3 of Downs shows only a rectangular shape as representing each document, rather than a visual similarity. The Alexander reference does not overcome this basic deficiency of Downs.

One advantage of the thumbnail image taught by the present invention over the technique described in Downs is that the thumbnail image "provides the user with a clue about how the document looks as well as provides a preview of the selected document's content".

Hence, turning to the clear language of the claims, there is no teaching or suggestion of "... generating a visual abstract for each of said documents, each visual abstract being a thumbnail image, each said thumbnail image comprising a visual similarity of said document as reduced in size, each said thumbnail image formed by manipulating a corresponding source document so as to enhance visibility of at least a first portion of said source document while degrading visibility of at least a second portion of said source document ...", as required by claim 10.

For this reason alone, the claimed invention as described by claims 10 and 17-21 is fully patentable over the Downs et al. reference.

Further, the other prior art of record has been reviewed, but it too, even in combination with the Downs or Alexander references, fails to teach, suggest, or render obvious the claimed invention.

III. FORMAL MATTERS AND CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicant submits that claims 1-33, all the claims presently pending in the application, are patentably distinct over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue at the earliest possible time.

Should the Examiner find the application to be other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to

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discuss any other changes deemed necessary in a telephonic or personal interview.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in fees or to credit any overpayment in fees to Attorney's Deposit Account No. 50-0481.

Respectfully Submitted,



Date: _____

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

The claims have been amended, as follows:

10. (Amended) A method of processing search results obtained in response to a user query, the method comprising:

 examining document pointers returned by a search engine to identify a source from which documents are available;

 obtaining said documents from said source;

 generating a visual abstract for each of said documents, each visual abstract being a[n] thumbnail image, each said thumbnail image comprising a visual similarity of said document as reduced in size, each said thumbnail image formed by manipulating a corresponding source document so as to enhance visibility of at least a first portion of said source document while degrading visibility of at least a second portion of said source document; and

 formatting a stream of data such that when said data is displayed on a display screen, each visual abstract appears adjacent to a corresponding search result.